VOWS made unto GOD in Tr
to be Religiously paid unto Him.

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SERMON

Preach'd

ON A

Special Occasion:

But *seasonable* for all that have made solemn Vows to GOD *in any Day* of Trouble.

By *JOHN WEBB*, M. A.
Pastor of a Church in BOSTON.

Eccl. V. 4. *When thou vowest a Vow unto God, defer not to pay it: for he hath no pleasure in Fools; pay that which thou hast vowed.*

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BRITISH MUSEUM

VOWS made unto GOD in Trouble to be Religiouſly paid unto Him.

PSALM. LXVI. 13, 24.

I will pay thee my Vows, which my Lips have uttered; and my Mouth hath ſpoken when I was in Trouble.

THERE is nothing more common than for Perſons of all Ages and Conditions to Vow and Promiſe to the LORD in a Time of Trouble and Diſtreſs. And ſince it is ſo, 'tis but reaſonable, and indeed [illegible], They ſhould ſometimes be put in Mind of the binding Nature of ſuch ſolemn Engagements to the LORD. For Sinners are no more apt to make Vows to GOD in a Day of Trouble, than they are prone

prone to forget them, when they think their Danger is a little over. The Bitterneſs of Death is no ſooner paſt, with the Generality of Men, but the concern they had for their Souls and another World, is at an End with it. And therefore, in Defiance to their late Vows and Reſolutions, they preſently betake themſelves to their old Trade of ſinning; and run into the ſame Exceſs of Iniquity they formerly lived in. And you ſhall ſee no viſible Change in them, from what they formerly were; unleſs it be (as it many times proves) from *bad* to *worſe*; or from a leſs Degree to the higheſt pitch of Wickedneſs. This indeed is a very melancholy Obſervation. But yet ſo univerſally true, "That I beleive (ſays a worthy Divine) I ſhall keep within compaſs, if I ſhould ſay, That ſcarce one in an Hundred of thoſe who come under Vows to God in Trouble & Diſtreſs take care with any Faithfulneſs to pay them afterwards." And this makes good what I ſaid concerning the Reaſonableneſs and Neceſſity of putting Men in mind ſometimes of the Binding Nature of ſuch ſolemn Vows and Promiſes, as they frequently make to God in a Day of Trouble. And I think [illegible] can never be more *ſeaſonable* than at this Juncture. For as God has lately in a moſt terrible manner threatned us all with one common and ſpeedy Deſtruction; ſo our Fears and Terrors were proportionably alarm'd

alarm'd in us. And I make no doubt, but when we had the doleful Prospects of Death and Eternity at the Door, we most of us made very sorrowful Reflections upon our past sinful and unprofitable Lives in the World; and solemnly Resolved and Promised to God, If He would but save us this once from Destruction, we would amend what had been amiss in our past Lives, and live more to His Glory, for the Time to come. I shall therefore, by the Help of God, endeavour to excite you to your Duty in this respect, in a brief Discourse upon these words of the Psalmist, *I will pay thee my Vows, which my Lips have uttered, and my Mouth hath spoken when I was in Trouble.*

Who this Psalmist was, or what particular Trouble he had been in, or what the subject Matter of his Vows were, I need not spend Time to enquire. It is enough to my Purpose to observe these two things in the Words,

1. The Psalmist, whoever he was, had been in Trouble and had made Vows to [illegible] the Day of it. *I was in Trouble,* says he; and he speaks here of *the Vows which his Lips had uttered* at that Time.

Again,

2. We have the *Resolution* of the Psalmist to pay the Vows he had made to God in his Distress. *I will pay thee my Vows,* &c.

I will pay them, that is, I am (by the Grace of GOD) Resolved upon the Duty. It is what GOD requires of me; what my Conscience loudly calls for; and what my own Safety & Interest much depends upon: I will therefore be as speedy and thorow in it, as GOD shall enable me to be, *&c.*

AND now from this pious Example in the Text, we may observe this *Doctrinal Note*, for our own Instruction.

Namely,

DOCTRINE,

WHENEVER Persons have made any solemn Vows & Promises to GOD, in a Day of Trouble, they are under indispensable Obligations to pay such Vows unto Him.

IN the Prosecution of this Subject, at large, I might here enter into a distinct Consideration of the Nature of Religious Vows and Promises in general; and shew you particularly, who the Object of them is: who the proper Subjects of them are: wherein the formal Nature of them consists: what Things are to be look'd upon as the allowable Matter of such Vows: How or after what Manner they ought to be made and for what special Ends and Design. But I intend only a plain and practical Discourse upon this Subject; and so shall prosecute

ſecute my Deſign under theſe more general Heads,

1. I ſhall ſhew what Vows and Promiſes Men are generally apt to make to God in a Day of Trouble & Diſtreſs.
2. I ſhall ſet before you ſome of the many ſolemn and indiſpenſible Obligations we are under, to Pay ſuch Vows and Promiſes unto God, when we have made them. And then,
3. I ſhall conclude with ſome proper and ſeaſonable Advice to all ſuch, as have at any Time; and more eſpecially of late, bro't themſelves anew under the Bonds of ſuch Vows and Promiſes to God. Here then,

I. I ſhall conſider *what Vows* and *Promiſes* Men are generally apt to make to God in a Day of Trouble and Diſtreſs.

That the generality of Men are very prone to make ſolemn Vows and Promiſes to God, when their Fears are awakened, either by the Threatning or Execution of Divine Judgments, is ſo fully confirmed by the Obſervation and Experience of every one, that I ſuppoſe, there is no need to enter into a diſtinct Proof of the point. Nor ſhall I be able to give you a diſtinct Account of all the particular Vows and Promiſes that Men have made in the Day of their Diſtreſs: But ſhall only conſider ſome of the more comprehenſive & important Ones; and ſuch as are more frequently made

made by all ſorts of Perſons, when they are under the oppreſſing Fears & Terrors of Divine Judgments.

And in general, *Theſe are Vows and Promiſes of future Reformation & Amendment of Life.* For there is nothing more common, than to hear Perſons of all Ranks and Ages, when they ſee their Lives in in imminent Danger, either by a ſore Fit of Sickneſs, or in a violent Storm at Sea, or by any other amazing Diſpenſation of Heaven; as by terrible *Thundrings* and *Lightnings*, or by tremendous Earthquakes; whereby we have all been very much alarm'd of late †: I ſay, 'tis very common, at ſuch Seaſons to have all ſorts of Perſons Vowing and Promiſing to God, to lead Lives more conformable than ever to His holy Law and Will, if He will but be pleaſed graciouſly to Hear their Prayers, and ſpare their Lives, and deliver them out of their Troubles. It is uſual both for Good and Bad to make ſome Vows & Promiſes of this kind, almoſt in every remarkable Affliction they are bro't into. But then as the Godly and Ungodly are in a vaſtly different Condition: the one being in a State of Grace, and the other in a State of Nature; ſo there is in ſome Reſpects an

† In the Night between the 29th & 30th of *October* 1727. And which was frequently repeated, in ſome places among us, for near nine Months following.

obſervable

" from the Sin that ſo eaſily beſets me, " *&c.*

AGAIN,

HAS the Child of GOD been too careleſs and negligent as to commanded Duty? Are there any of the plain & poſitive Inſtitutions of his LORD and Maſter, which he has lived in a ſhameful *Omiſſion* of? Let me Inſtance here, in that of the *Lords-Supper* (for I would charitably hope, that ſome who have, for a great while together, lived in a ſad neglect of that precious Ordinance, have yet had the Root of the Matter, or a Principle of Grace, in their Hearts: And if ſo) then when GOD corrects ſuch an one for his ſhameful Omiſſion, we may ſoon hear him making his Confeſſions & Promiſes to GOD after this manner; " O LORD, I " bluſh, and am aſhamed to think how " regardleſs I have been of my Duty to " Thee. I have hearkened to the accurſed Temptations of Satan, and made " many ſinful Excuſes, and given way to " unwarrantable Fears: and by theſe Means " I have been guilty of ſlighting the Authority and deſpiſing the dying Love and " Command of my Bleſſed REDEEMER. " O LORD, Forgive this criminal & ſcandalous Neglect of a known Duty, which " I have ſo long liv'd in; and I now ſolemnly Promiſe and Reſolve, by the " Help of thy Grace, to break thro' all " Diſcouragements; and even *to make*

" *haſte, and make no Delay*, in my Obe-
" dience to thy Will. It is my full pur-
" poſe to keep all thy Commandments,
" as far as Thou ſhalt enable me; and in
" particular, as ſoon as I have an Oppor-
" tunity for it, my Purpoſe is, to give up
" my Name and Heart to Thee at the
" holy Table of my dear LORD & SAVI-
" OUR. O ſtrengthen theſe Reſolutions in
" me, and help me to perform them, for
" the ſake of thy dear Son.

OR, once more,

HAS the Child of GOD fallen into any careleſs and negligent Frames in Duty? Has he been too Remiſs in the Work and Service of his LORD & Maſter? too formal, dead and dull, in his Attendance upon GOD? And does GOD awaken him by any afflictive Diſpenſation? Now we may hear him bewailing his Infirmities of this Kind; and Confeſſing and Reſolving before GOD, after this manner. " O LORD, I have been but
" a poor unprofitable Servant, & Deſerved,
" long before now, to have been *cut down,*
" *as a Cumberer of thy Ground.* I have
" been negligent in thy Service; dull and
" formal in the Duties of Religion: My
" Heart has been cold; my Affec-
" dead; my Graces, if I have any, very
" much aſleep, *&c.* O LORD, Forgive
" my paſt Negligence, Formality & Hy-
" poc riſy. And I now Reſolve & Promiſe
" by thy Grace, That if I have any further

" Time

"Time to serve Thee upon Earth, I'll be
"more Lively and Active, more Diligent
"and Faithful in thy Service. I'll endea-
"vour to impress my Heart with a much
"deeper Sense of the infinite Being and
"Perfections of that GOD, with whom I
"have to do; and of the weighty Obliga-
"tions I am under to Love and Fear, to
"Seek and Serve Thee with my whole
"Heart. O LORD, *Quicken me after thy*
"*Word.* Enlarge my Heart by thy Grace
"and Spirit; and so shall I run the ways of
"thy Commandments, with Chearfulness
"and Delight, *&c.* And after this man-
ner are the Saints wont to Vow and Pro-
mise to GOD, when they fall under the sen-
sible Chastisements of their heavenly Fa-
ther.

BUT this may suffice to be said concerning the Vows and Promises of the Godly in the Day of their Trouble & Distress.

I proceed now to say,

2. WHEN the WICKED are bro't into any great Affliction, and have the Fears and Terrors of Divine Wrath before their Eyes, 'tis usual for them also *to make solemn Vows & Promises to GOD, of future Reformation and Amendment of Life.* By the Wicked here, I intend, all such as are in a Christless and Graceless State: Such as are under the Dominion of Sin & Lust; and have no true Love to GOD; nor any Thing

of the true Fear of God in their Hearts, and the like. Now 'tis very common to meet with such Persons as these in some deep Distress or other. Sometimes, we see, God casts them upon a Bed of Sickness, and brings them to the very Brink of the Grave. Sometimes He threatens them with sudden Death, in a terrible Storm at Sea, or by some amazing Providence ashore. And then the poor Wretch receives the Sentence of Death in Himself. He has the doleful Prospects of the other World before his Eyes: and apprehends, He must speedily appear at the awful Bar of God, where he must first give up a dreadful Account of his past wicked Life, and then receive an amazing and irreversible Sentence of Condemnation to Eternal Death. These direful Prospects fill his Soul with horrid Anguish and Distress. And then in the midst of his fearful Agonies, you may hear him many times Confessing his past wicked Deeds; and Vowing and Resolving against them, according as the Tenor of his Conversation has been.

Hence,

If he has been an openly profane Person; a loose & debauch'd Wretch; one that has had but little if any Restraint upon his Corruptions; and one that has wallowed in Beastly Lusts and Pleasures --- Then in his Fright and Amazement, you may hear him Confessing and Bewailing his Sins of this Kind, one after another, with the many Aggra-

Aggravations that have attended them; as they have been againſt the Light & Convictions of his own Conſcience; againſt the Strivings of the holy SPIRIT of GOD; againſt the ſolemn Counſels, Commands and earneſt Intreaties of pious Parents, Miniſters and Chriſtian Friends; and even againſt former ſolemn Vows and Engagements of his own to the contrary: And upon the whole, You may hear him Renewing his Vows and Promiſes to GOD after this manner, "Oh! If GOD will but this "once ſpare my Life from Deſtruction, and "keep my Soul a little longer from going "down into everlaſting Burnings, at which "I exceedingly fear and tremble, I'll "ſpeedily become a New Man, and lead "a New Life. I'll forſake my wicked "Company, thoſe Companions that have "enſnared me heretofore, and never more "be enticed by them into Sin, as I have "fooliſhly been. I'll abandon my former "wicked way of Living. I'll no longer "indulge a looſe and profligate Tongue. "I'll no more Swear profanely, nor take "the great and dreadful Name of GOD in "vain, as I have done thouſands of times in the Days that are paſt. I'll be careful not to give way again to a Courſe of Lying, Slandering, Back-biting, Reviling, Reproaching the Servants of GOD, and the Sacred Things of GOD, as I "have done. I'll no more ſpend and

" waſte away my precious Time & Sub-
" ſtance in Idleneſs, Gaming, Drunken-
" neſs, Uncleanneſs, or the like. But on
" the other hand, I'll lead a more ſober
" and circumſpect Life for the future; a Life
" more agreable, than I have yet done, to
" the holy Law of God. I'll endeavour
" to fear God and keep his Command-
" ments all my Days: I'll remember to
" ſanctify His Sabbaths, and keep them
" holy: I'll make Conſcience of ſearch-
" ing into the holy Scriptures, and Read-
" ing ſome Portion of them every Day:
" I am Reſolved for the Time to come to
" Reverence the Houſe and Ordinances of
" God: I'll attentively Hear and Obey
" the Word preached; and prepare to give
" up my Name to God in more ſpecial
" Ordinances, which I have deſpiſed. I'll
" Call upon God, whom I have hitherto
" neglected: I'll Call upon Him as long
" as I Live: I'll Pray to Him Morning and
" Night; in my Cloſet, and in my Fa-
" mily. I'll endeavor to receive & em-
" brace Jesus Christ, whom I have
" heretofore ſlighted & turned a deaf Ear
" unto: I'll do all I can to Believe in,
" and Obey Him. I'll no more quench
" the ſtrivings of God's Spirit, nor ſti-
" fle the Convictions of my own Conſcience
" as, alas! I have done many thouſands
" of Times. And in a word, If God will
" but hear my Prayer, and reſcue me this

" once

" once from the Jaws of Death, and the " dreadful Pit of Hell, and ſo try me a " little longer, He ſhall ſoon ſee me alter " my wicked Courſe of Living, and ſpend " the Remainder of my Days in His Ser- " vice and to His Glory". Theſe, and ſuch like, are the ſolemn Vows and Promiſes, which the openly profane Sinner is wont to make before God, when he has the Terrors of Death, and the Proſpects of Eternity before his Eyes.

And ſo again,

If the Sinner has been a poor tho'tleſs, unconcern'd Creature. One not ſo openly profane as many others; but yet has lived in a careleſs neglect of God and his own Soul; then when he is rouſed & ſtartled by any threatning Diſpenſation of Heaven, you may hear him bewailing his former Blindneſs and Stupidity, and Reſolving to make the Glory of God, and the Care of his precious Soul, his main Buſineſs for the Time to come.

Or, once more,

If he has been an Hypocritical Worker of Iniquity: One who, by a refined Life and Morals, has endeavoured to Cheat Himſelf and Others, and made uſe of Religion only as a Cloke to conceal his Wickedneſs from the World, and obtain a good Name among Men: then, when he is awakened by any ſurprizing Providence, you may hear him ſometimes ingenuouſly confeſs,

That

That he has been a moſt treacherous, deceitful and hypocritical Wretch: One that has Lied to God and Man. And with a ſeeming Abhorrence of Himſelf, come into ſuch Reſolutions and Promiſes as theſe. "Oh! If God will but ſpare my Life a "little longer, I'll no more play the Hy- "pocrite before Him and the World, as I "have done: But I'll labour after Purity "and Integrity of Heart, and walk before "Him, for the Time to come, in the Up- "rightneſs of my Heart and Ways.

And thus upon the whole, you ſee what kind of Vows and Promiſes the generality of Men are apt to make to God in a Day of Trouble and Diſtreſs. And this was the firſt general Head I propoſed to ſpeak to.

And this leads me now,

II. To ſet before you ſome of the many ſolemn and indiſpenſable *Obligations* we are under, to Pay all ſuch Vows and Promiſes as theſe unto God.

This is a Head that needs to be taken into ſerious Conſideration: For woful Experience and Obſervation makes it evident to a Demonſtration, That Men, for the moſt part, are as prone to forget their Vows and Promiſes to God, when He has delivered them out of Trouble, as ever they were ready to make them in the Day of their Fears and Diſtreſs. And therefore I ſhall take a little Pains here to ſhow you, how

Binding

Binding theſe Vows and Engagements are; and to make you ſenſible, if I can by the Help of Grace, that you cannot Slight and Diſregard them, without breaking thro' all the ſacred Tyes of Duty, Gratitude and Intereſt. To proceed then; I ſhall Name *four* or *five* of the many weighty Obligations we are under to the Duty before us.

And,

1. *Obligation,* We expreſly make Our ſelves *Debtors to GOD* by all ſuch Vows and Promiſes as theſe: And therefore are bound to Pay them, *in Point of Juſtice.* Every Religious Vow, of which Nature are theſe under our Conſideration, ſuppoſes a ſolemn *Contract* with the Great GOD: And does very particularly expreſs the Obligation in it on our Part. This will quickly appear, if we examine into the Nature of any particular Vow recorded in Scripture; or of any one we have made our ſelves. For what was the Reaſon and End of the ſolemn Vows you have made to God? Was it not to move His Pity towards you in your Anguiſh and Diſtreſs? And did you not mean to make ſome poor Requital to God, in the Payment of them, if He would but Pity and Spare and Deliver you out of Trouble? And has not God taken your Word for it? And ſent you the Salvation you ſought and deſired for this End? And can any one think this falls ſhort, in the leaſt, of a ſolemn Contract between the great

great God and the afflicted Sinner? And if it does not (as I can't see how any one in Reason can suppose it does;) then, when God has so far hearkned to our Request in a Day of Trouble, as to spare our Lives and save us from that Destruction which we fear'd, we become Debtors to Him, by every Vow & Promise we make unto Him: and are under as strict Obligation to pay it in point of Justice, as any Man *is* or *can be* to pay a certain *Sum of Money*, upon his Receiving the Goods he has indented for. We have solemnly given our Word to the Great GOD, which He looks upon as Authentic and Binding, as any *Bond* we can give to Man under Hand and Seal, and before many Witnesses in Writing. Now Justice in dealing among Men has always been accounted *sacred*. And therefore when any Man has once given his Word or Bond for the Payment of any Sum, we usually say, such a Man is bound in Justice to the Payment of it. It is a Debt that he owes; and when it is in his power to give it at the set Time, he cant withold it, without manifest Dishonesty and Injustice. And now if Justice so strictly binds us in our dealing with Men, much more does it oblige us in our Transacting with the Great GOD; which in it self, is a matter of infinitely greater weight & solemnity. Thus are we strongly bound in point of Justice to Pay all our Vows unto God most High.

Again,

AGAIN,

2. *Obligation*, WHEN we have received ſuch Mercies from GOD, as were the *Condition* of our Vows and Promiſes, then are we obliged to Pay them *in Point of Gratitude*. It is not uſual for Men to make ſolemn expreſs Vows to GOD, but when they ſtand in need of ſome ſpecial Favour from Him, either Spiritual or Temporal; and then they are wont to Vow & Promiſe as a likely Means to move the LORD (if poſſible) to beſtow the Mercy they need; and to ſtrengthen their Faith in Him for the Beſtowment of it. This, to be ſure, is the Caſe with *all* that make Vows to GOD in a Day of Trouble. They are either upon a Sick-Bed, and ſo ſtand in need of Healing Mercy; or in ſome other great Straight or Hazard, and ſo ſtand in need of ſparing and delivering Mercy. And when they are thus in Trouble, their own Safety and Intereſt calls upon them to make their application to GOD for his gracious Aid and Protection. And therefore they ask His Pity & Compaſſion: They implore His Help and Relief: They beg healing and ſparing Mercy: They are importunate in their Cries to Heaven upon this Account. And that they may ſucceed the better in their Supplications, to the Throne of Grace; they back their Petitions with ſuch Vows & Promiſes, as we have been ſpeaking of; and engage to GOD by all that is ſacred, That if He will but Hear

Hear and Anſwer their Requeſts, and ſend Deliverance & Enlargement to them, they'l forſake their former evil Ways and Doings, and Love and Fear and Serve Him all the Days of their Lives. Upon this, God has many a Time heard their Supplications and ſent them the deſired Salvation. Several Inſtances of this kind we have on ſacred Record: and particularly in the 107th *Pſalm* throughout. And I am ſure there are many ſuch at this Day. Yea, we are moſt of us remarkable Examples of this kind. For how earneſtly did we Cry to God? how ſolemnly did we Vow & Promiſe to Him, in the Time of our late Fears and Hazards? And how gracious has God been in ſparing our Lives, and ſaving us from that common Deſtruction we were threatned withal? We never deſerved ſuch Salvation and Deliverance as this, tho' we earneſtly pray'd for it. 'Twas Mercy we ſought for in our Trouble, and Mercy we have received in being ſpared to this Day. And therefore when we, or any elſe, receive ſuch ſignal Mercy from the Lord, we are oblig'd to pay our Vows to Him, not only in point of Juſtice, but alſo in point of Gratitude. For every Kindneſs we receive, deſerves a Return of Gratitude, in Proportion to the Nature and Merit of the Kindneſs. Now the Mercy we receive from God, in theſe Preſervations we ſought to Him for, is of that noble and exalted Kind, that

that we are bound by the Laws of Gratitude to make all the Returns to Him that we can poſſibly make. And indeed, when we have done our beſt, we have done nothing in proportion to the leaſt Favour we have ever received from the Lord, in the whole Courſe of our Lives. And therefore, when Sinners are ſo unjuſt as to with-hold or defer the Payment of their Vows unto God, they break thro' all the Ties of Gratitude; and render themſelves more vile and undeſerving than the Beaſts that periſh. For as the Prophet obſerves in Iſa. 1. 3. *The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Aſs his Maſter's Crib*, i. e. They have a ſeeming grateful Senſe from whom they receive a Kindneſs: *But theſe* ungrateful Wretches *do not know, they do not conſider.*

But to go on,

3. *Obligation*, The *ſacred Nature* of Religious Vows and Promiſes lays us under the ſtricteſt Obligation to the Payment of them. A Religious Vow is a very ſerious and ſolemn matter. It is directed to God, who is the only proper Object of Religious Worſhip. And ſuch Vows as we are ſpeaking of, were made unto God, when, it muſt be ſuppoſed, we were in as ſerious a Frame, and as much in earneſt, as ever in our whole Lives. For if Men are not ſerious and in earneſt about matters, when they have the Proſpects of Death & Eternity at the Door, 'tis impoſſible, one would think,

they ſhould ever be ſo in any Caſe. And now ſince theſe Vows and Promiſes are of ſo ſacred and ſolemn a nature, we are unqueſtionably bound Religiouſly to obſerve and fulfill them. We are under the ſame general Engagement to pay them, that we are under to perform any one Act of Divine Worſhip. And therefore the Payment of them, is called *an holy Sacrifice unto God*, Pſal. 116. 17. And this Sacrifice is as due to Him, as the Sacrifice of Prayer, or any other Religious Duty whatever. So that for any Sinner to withold this Debt from God, is in Effect to Proclaim, that he has a Diſpenſation to be as Irreligious as he pleaſes: and that, if it ſuits beſt with his Luſts, he's at Liberty to caſt off the whole Service of God at once.

But beſides this,

4. *Obligation*, Let us conſider the *Matter* of ſuch Vows and Promiſes as are uſually made to God in a Day of Trouble, and 'twill appear from hence that we are under the ſtrongeſt Obligation to the Payment of them. Now, as I ſaid before, the Matter of theſe Vows is, for the moſt part, *Reformation and Amendment of Life*. For when guilty Sinners come to lie upon a Sick-Bed, or are in any other imminent Danger, whereby they have the Proſpect of Death and Judgment near at Hand, the Subject that more frequently exerciſes & torments their Minds, is the ſinfulneſs and diſorder of their paſt

paſt Lives. Serious Reflections upon this Head, do exceedingly ſhock and diſtreſs their guilty Conſciences, when they apprehend themſelves near the Gates of the Grave, and near the awful Bar of Revenging Juſtice. And therefore, at ſuch a Time, 'tis as common as any Thing in the World, to hear them expreſs their Reſolutions and Promiſes to GOD, That if He'll but pity and ſpare them, *They'l Repent and turn from their Sins to the Living GOD, and lead Lives of new and exact Obedience to His holy Commandments, as long as they live.* Now when Sinners in their Extremity Vow and Promiſe to do thus, 'tis *no matter of Indifferency* they Reſolve upon: but *indiſpenſable Duty*, whether they Vow to perform it, or not. It is what the ſacred Law of GOD requires of us, whether we do, or do not actually bring our ſelves under ſolemn Bonds to the Diſcharge of it. To make this evident I ſhall only name three or four *Texts*, wherein the Sum of all theſe Vows and Promiſes are expreſly demanded of every one of us, without any Limitation or Reſerve. As for Inſtance, Do we Vow and Reſolve to Repent of all our Sins and turn from them to GOD? This is expreſly required of us in Ezek. 18. 30, 31. *Repent and turn your ſelves from all your Tranſgreſſions; ſo Iniquity ſhall not be your Ruin. Caſt away from you all your Tranſgreſſions; whereby ye have tranſgreſſed, and make*

you a new Heart and a new Spirit. And Eph. 5. 11. *Have no Fellowſhip with the unfruitful Works of Darkneſs, but rather Reprove them.* Again, Do we Vow and Reſolve upon a Life of holy Obedience to the Commandments of God, and Promiſe to Love and Fear and Serve Him all the Days of our Lives? What can be more expreſs to this Purpoſe than thoſe ſacred Precepts? Deut. 10. 12, 13. *And now Iſrael, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love, and to ſerve the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul. To keep the Commandments of the Lord and his Statutes, which I Command thee this Day.* Matth. 4. 10.--- *Thou ſhalt Worſhip the Lord thy God, and Him only ſhalt thou ſerve.* So that you may plainly ſee here, we are indiſpenſably bound to theſe Duties by the ſupream Authority of God: He makes a moſt ſtrict demand of them in His unchangable Law. And therefore when we ſolemnly Vow and Promiſe to perform theſe Things, we only add one Obligation to another; and as far as in us lies ſtrengthen the Bonds we are under both by Nature and Grace to yield this Obedience to God. And accordingly, We ſhall highly aggravate our preſent Guilt and future Condemnation, if we take no Care to fulfil theſe our Engagements to the Lord.

And

And to this I ſhall add,

5. *Obligation,* We are obliged to Pay all our Vows to God, *by his own expreſs Command.* God has not left us to our own Liberty in this Caſe: but expreſly Demands the Payment of them. To inſtance here in two or three Places that are full to the Purpoſe, Deut. 23. 21, 23. *When thou voweſt a Vow unto the Lord thy God, thou ſhalt not ſlack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will ſurely require it of thee; and it will be Sin in thee.--- That which is gone out of thy Lips, thou ſhalt keep & perform.* And ſo again in Eccleſ. 5. 4, 5. *When thou voweſt unto God defer not to pay it; for he hath no Pleaſure in Fools. Pay that which thou haſt Vowed. Better is it, that thou ſhouldſt not Vow, than that thou ſhouldſt Vow and not pay.* Indeed, By the Vows that are here ſpoken of, we are *nextly* to underſtand ſuch as are made abo ut Matters purely of an indifferent Nature in themſelves. But ſince the Precept is ſo expreſs for the Payment of theſe; it may be urg'd with great Advantage, for the Payment of ſuch Vows as are made about matters of indiſpenſible Neceſſity in the Nature of them: ſuch as theſe we are ſpeaking of. And now ſince God ſo expreſly requires the matter of us; this determines our Duty in the Caſe beyond all Contradiction. For the revealed Will of God is the higheſt and only proper Rule for our Obedience.

And then,

6. *Obligation*, Lastly, Our own *Interest* binds us firmly to the Payment of these Vows unto God. For next to the Glory of God our own Interest and Welfare is the great thing we are oblig'd to provide for. This the Laws both of Nature and Grace make to be our indispensable Duty: And every Man from a Principle of Self-Love, is ready enough to own his Obligations hereunto. And now to evidence the Truth in hand from this Consideration, If we Religiously pay our Vows unto God, 'twill be of infinite Advantage to us on spiritual Accounts wherein our only true Interest does consist. For, as I observed before, the Matter of these Vows is *Sin & Duty*: We Vow against Sin and Resolve upon Duty. And therefore if we pay our Vows, we shall necessarily forsake our Sins and turn unto God. And this will be a means to ease the Mind of many of those distressing Fears that attend a guilty and accusing Conscience, and keep the Sinner from running deeper into Debt to Divine Justice, whereby his Guilt and Condemnation wou'd be greatly aggravated at the last Day. And then besides, 'twill Recommend us to the Favour and Acceptance of God, thro' Jesus Christ. And being accepted of Him *in the Beloved*, we shall be secure in his Favour from all Evil. For He'll be with us in the midst of all future Troubles and Temptations; and

say

say to us as to *Jacob* of old, Isa. 43. 2, 3. *When thou passest thro' the Waters I will be with thee, and thro' the Rivers they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest thro' the Fire, thou shalt not be burnt: neither shall the Flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the holy One of Israel.* And agreably, His Ear will always be open to our Cry, and His Hand stretch'd out to afford us the most profitable Salvations in this World. But above all when we come to Dye, He'll save us from our *Sins* and from that *Eternal Wrath* which is the proper Demerit of them; and Conduct us safe into His Eternal Kingdom, which will be compleat everlasting Salvation.

And thus I have laid before you several of the most weighty & indispensable Obligations we are under to pay unto God the Vows which our Lips have uttered, and our Mouths have spoken when we were in Trouble. And this was the *Second* general Head I proposed to consider.

And therefore,

III. I proceed now the *last Thing* I named to you, and this is, To *give some proper Counsel & Direction*, to all such as have at any Time, but more especially in the late Day of universal Distress, brought themselves *anew* under the solemn Bonds of such Vows and Promises to God, as we have

have considered in the preceeding Discourse.

And in one word, my solemn Advice to you is this, *Pay unto the Lord the Vows which your Lips have uttered and your Mouths have spoken when you were in Distress.* This I am sure is *a Word in Season*; and a Word that you must and will hearken to, if you have any true Regard for the Glory of God, or the Welfare of your precious and immortal Souls. But since the generality of those, who are most nearly concern'd in the Matter, are exceeding apt to turn a *deaf* Ear to such Counsel as this; and all that can be said does prove too little, to bring many of them to a sense of their Duty, in this Respect, I shall prosecute my general Design under this Head in speaking to these two Particulars,

1. I shall name several Considerations to the careless and negligent to awaken them (if it may be by the Grace of God) to a sense of their Duty in this Regard.

   And then,

2. Lay down some plain and necessary *Directions* for the Help of such as are convinced of their Duty, and desire to pay their Vows unto the most High.

(1.) I shall propound a few Considerations to the *careless* and *negligent* to Awaken

KEN them, if possible, to a sense of their Duty in this regard.

AND here, besides the several Obligations I have mention'd already, which may serve as so many Motives to the Duty, I beseech you, in the Name and Fear of GOD, to consider the following particulars,

1. Consider, YOUR Obligations to Pay your Vows to GOD *are the same*, whether you regard them, or not. It is not the Breach of these Vows that will discharge you from your Obligations to the Payment of them. You may indeed, by your Forgetfulness of them, lose all the Benefit that is to be gained by a Religious Fulfilment of them; but the Binding Nature of them is the same, tho' you should never more think of them to your dying Day. And therefore first or last you must be Responsable to GOD for all your Vows, whether you will or no. He Requires the Matter of you; and you must either Pay the Debt to GOD, or run the Risk of his highest Displeasure, for withholding His due from Him.

AGAIN,

2. To Neglect or Defer the Payment of these Vows will be *a dreadful Aggravation of your Guilt* in the sight of GOD. For here is a Complication of the blackest Crimes in it. It is big with horrid Unjustice, with monstrous Ingratitude, with the boldest Contempt of the Divine Authority,

thority, with the vileſt Prophanation of that which is ſacred; and in a word, with the moſt perfidious Perjury: For Vows and Promiſes made to God carry the Nature of a ſolemn Oath in them. And therefore to Slight and Contemn ſuch Vows, is a Sin that ſtains the Reputation, that defiles the Conſcience, and wounds the Soul of a Sinner, as much almoſt as any one Sin he can fall into. And then beſides, 'tis uſual for ſuch Sinners as Deſpiſe the Vows and Promiſes they made to God in Trouble, to grow worſe after their Deliverance than before. For their ungrateful and treacherous Dealing with God, provokes Him many times to give them up to the Power of Sin and Satan, and *their own Hearts Luſts*, Pſal. 81. 7, 11, 12. compared. And being judicially forſaken of God, their Luſts ſoon break all Bounds of Reſtraint, and they run into the greateſt Exceſs of Wickedneſs. For as our Saviour obſerves in Matth. 12. 43, 44, 45. *When the unclean Spirit is gone out of a Man*, (as he ſeems to do in the Time of a Sinner's Diſtreſs) *he walketh through dry Places, ſeeking Reſt, and findeth none: Then he ſaith*, i. e. After the Sinner is got a little over his Fears and Danger in his own Apprehenſion, *I will return into my Houſe, from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, ſwept and garniſhed. Then goeth he and taketh to himſelf ſeven other*

Spirits

Spirits more wicked than Himſelf, and they enter in and dwell there: and the laſt State of that Man is worſe than the firſt. i. e. He grows more vile and wicked than ever, and more expoſed to the Righteous Judgments of God.

And therefore,

3. Conſider, 'Tis very likely by this Means, you'l provoke the Lord, in a little Time, *to bring ſome new and heavier Judgments upon you,* than you have yet felt. Indeed Sinners are apt to think when one Trouble is over, they are ſecure from the like, or any other Trouble for a great while to come. But this is a wretched Miſtake; and they many times find it ſo by doleful Experience. For God has expreſly threatned to inflict ſeven and ſeven times heavier Plagues upon ſuch as refuſe to amend their ways by former & lighter Judgments. Lev. 26. 18. *And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will puniſh you ſeven times more for your Sins.* And this awful Threatning is repeated no leſs than three or four Times in this ſame *Chapter.* And there are many ſad Examples on ſacred Record, in whom it had it's dreadful Accompliſhment. And 'tis no unuſual Thing, for ſuch as are careful Obſervers of the Courſe of Divine Providence towards incorrigable Sinners, to ſee new & heavier Troubles

Troubles come upon the back of former and lighter ones. For God has oft-times met them in their ſinful Courſe, and in the height of their Security; and Renewed and Multiply'd their Sorrows upon them. He has followed them with one Judgment after another, till he has broken them to Pieces on the Wheel of His Revenging Juſtice.

But however you may eſcape for the preſent; yet,

4. Conſider, The Breach of ſuch ſolemn Vows as you have made, will cauſe *bitter Reflections, and greatly aggravate your Sorrows,* upon the Return of your Troubles; as you can't but *think* and *own* they will do ſome time or other. For then your Conſciences, unleſs they are judicially hardned by God, will be ſadly wounded, and your Souls diſmay'd to think how Treacherouſly and Deceitfully you have dealt with God in this Matter. And a thouſand to one but the Remembrance of theſe Things will throw you into the very agonies of Raging Deſpair. For, How frequent is it to hear a poor Sinner Crying out upon a *Sick-Bed,* in the Bitterneſs of his Soul, "Alas! "I am undone to Eternity. There is no "Mercy, no Hope for ſuch a Wretch as I "am. The Door of Grace is now ſhut "againſt me for my perfidious Dealing "with the Great God. For once before "(if not often) I was in the like outward

"Trouble,

" Trouble, and then I was filled, as " I now am, with the Fears and Ter- " rors of the Wrath to come; and in " the midst of those Troubles I cried " to the LORD for Mercy and Deliverance; " and solemnly Promised to spend the Rest " of my Days, in His Service, if He wou'd " but give me some further space for Re- " pentance and Reformation. And then " GOD heard and granted my Petition: " But the Mercy was no sooner obtained, " but I forgot the Kindness of GOD in it, " and the solemn Promises I made to Him, " and soon return'd to my Iniquities as the " Dog to his Vomit. And now I am so " confounded and amazed at the Prospect " of my Guilt herein, that I durst not look " towards GOD's holy Temple for any " more Mercy; for He appears arm'd with " Vengeance against me, and comes forth " like a devouring Fire to consume me " forever." And thus if the Sinner ever Survives his Troubles, and is brought to true Repentance for his Sins, 'tis usually a great while before he attains to a setled Peace in his own Soul; and his Bones are first broken to pieces. But oft-times we see such perfidious Wretches go out of the World in the very Height of agonizing Despair, for *this* and their other aggravated Transgressions. For when Sinners have Prov'd themselves false to GOD once and again, He frequently comes to a Determina-

tion in Himself to Trust no longer to the Vows and Promises they make in their Extremity. And then tho' they renew their Cries and Promises to Heaven, 'tis to no Purpose. For God Rejects their Prayers, and despises their most solemn Protestations to to Him, and even laughs at their Calamity: And so in the greatest Disdain, casts them off the very Face of the Earth. Read, *Prov.* 2. 24th *to the End.*

And now,

5. Lastly, Consider, If you *Die* under the Guilt of these broken Vows and Promises, *they'l appear as so many dreadful Witnesses against you,* at the Judgment Seat of Christ. For all the Vows and Promises you ever made to God, in a Day of Trouble, are upon *File* in Heaven. God has taken an exact Account of every one of them, together with the Time, the Occasion, the Manner and the Witnesses of them; and written them indelibly in His Book of Remembrance. And therefore, When the last Trump shall Sound, and the Dead be Raised, and called to Judgment; you'l arise, and go trembling to the dreadful Bar of Justice. And there you'l be arraigned not only for all your Sins in general, but for the horrid Breach of these Vows and Promises in particular. And when they have all been Recited, with the aggravating Circumstances that attended the Breach of them; not only in your own Hearing,

ing, but in the Audience of the whole Aſſembly of Angels and Men; you'l be Condemned to Eternal Death for them; and your own Conſciences will then Aſſent both to the Truth of the Indictment, and the Righteouſneſs of the Sentence paſt upon it. And now, If this ſhould be your Caſe, How do you think you ſhall be able to hold up your Heads in that terrible Day? Can't you imagine ſomething of the amazing Horror and Anguiſh, that will ſeize upon, and Torment you forever, even upon this very Account? And don't you think your Caſe then will be much worſe, and that deſervedly too, than the Condition of the Sinners of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*? It will certainly be ſo, to your everlaſting Amazement, whatever your paſt Apprehenſions have been.

And now to cloſe theſe awakening Conſiderations, Let me beſeech you in the Bowels of Christ to think of theſe Things. Think often; Think ſeriouſly and ſolemnly upon them: Think till you find your Hearts affected with them. And Oh! That the merciful God, by his Almighty Power and Grace, wou'd render them effectual to awaken & ſtir up every careleſs and forgetful Sinner, that may Read theſe Lines, to call to Mind, and Pay, the Vows which his Lips have uttered and his Mouth hath ſpoken when he was in Trouble!

And having said these Things to Awaken and Rouse the negligent Sinner,

(2.) I proceed now, to lay down a few *plain* and *necessary* Directions for the Assistance of such as have brought themselves under the solemn Bonds of these Vows to God, and are willing to Pay their Debt to the most high.

1. *Direction*, Take Care to *recollect* and *keep in mind* the solemn Vows and Promises you made to God in the Day of your Trouble. To this end, Retire a little now and then from the Noise & Cares of the World, and then look back & consider, what Days of Adversity you have past thro'; and whether you made any Vows to God in them, or no. If you have, then call these Vows to mind as particularly as you can. Consider the Time when they were made; the Occasion and Manner of them; and the Motives that led you into them, and the like. And as for such as have Ability and Time for it, you wou'd do well to *write* down the most weighty and important ones; and keep a Record of them, to Repair to, as you may have Occasion for it. This was *David's* Practice, as we may learn from *his Book of Psalms*; which was taken chiefly from his own *Diary*; and where we have a particular Account of many of the Vows and Promises

Promiſes he made to God in the Days of Adverſity that rowl'd over his Head. And it has been the Practiſe of many beſides *David*; and they have richly found their Account in it. For it has been a ſingular Means to keep ſuch Vows in mind, which otherwiſe they would have been in danger of Forgetting. And if they are but any ways kept in Remembrance, as they ſhould be, this will wonderfully Quicken and Direct us in the Payment of them.

2. *Direction*, Endeavour alſo to maintain the ſame *Senſe* you had of Things, and the ſame *Frame* & *Temper* of Mind, as when you made your Vows and Promiſes unto God: And to this purpoſe, Conſider deliberately with your ſelves, what Apprehenſions you then had about future and inviſible Things. What Thoughts of God and Christ; of Holineſs and Sin; of Heaven and Hell. Conſider again, How neceſſary you eſteem'd an Intereſt in Christ, and how freely you could have parted with every Thing in the World to have been aſſured of it upon juſt and good Grounds. Conſider alſo, what Impreſſions the Remembrance of your paſt Iniquities made then upon you: How intolerable the Load of them was. How they oppreſs'd and burdened your Conſcience, and were ready to ſink you down into the loweſt Hell.

Once more, Consider, What an awful Sense you had of Divine Wrath; and how terrible the Fears of Hell, when you tho't you were just going to suffer the Torments of them. Furthermore, Consider how mean and despicable the World then appear'd in your Eyes: How vain & empty the Honours, Profits and Pleasures of it; which are the Things you formerly doated on. And upon the whole, Consider how fully you were convinced that a close Walk with God, and a Life of Practical Religion, was the safest and best Life you cou'd live in the World. No doubt, you had very lively Convictions and Apprehensions of such Things as these, when you had the dark and dismal Prospects of Death and Eternity before your Eyes. And it was these Apprehensions that made you to cry aloud, and Vow to God, in the Day of your Distress. And therefore your Duty is to keep these Convictions alive in you; And as they wrought so far in your Extremity, as to excite you *then* to make Vows unto God; so the abiding Impressions of them, will be a continual Spur to quicken you to the Payment of them; and prove a strong Guard and Defence against the many Temptations that lie in the way of your Duty.

And then,

3. *Direction*, Take the *first Opportunity* to begin the Payment of your Vows unto

unto God. Don't defer the Duty in hopes of a more convenient Seaſon hereafter. But as in the Time of Vowing, if you intended any thing, you intended, no doubt, if God would but Pity and ſpare your Lives, to Live to His Glory from that Day forward: ſo if you have hitherto neglected the Duty, Begin this very Day to anſwer thoſe ſolemn Bonds unto God. This we are directed to, by the Poſitive Command of Heaven. 5. 4. *When thou voweſt a vow unto God, Defer not to pay it,* i. e. Don't put off the Duty till hereafter. Don't think that to-morrow, or any Time to come is more proper than the preſent Day to begin the Duty in: But look upon *this* Seaſon as the moſt *convenient* if not the *only* Seaſon you are ever like to have for this purpoſe. And the Reaſon that is given here to inforce the Command, is this, *For God hath no pleaſure in Fools.* Which is a plain Intimation that ſuch as Deſpiſe their former Vows, and ſo defer the Payment of them, are in a State of Unregeneracy: For none but ſuch are properly Fools in a Scripture Senſe. And then beſides, To put off this Duty till hereafter, is to give way to Temptation, and to put your ſelves in the mean time into the Hands of Satan; and then a thouſand to one, whether you are ever reſcued from his Power till he has accompliſhed your everlaſting Deſtruction.

Therefore

Therefore Pay that which thou haſt vowed. Pay it ſpeedily; pay it without one Moments unneceſſary Delay.

And as you muſt be ſpeedy: So,

4. *Direction,* You muſt be *Univerſal* in the Payment of your Vows. And therefore if you have vow'd the Mortification of any particular Luſt, don't ſpare it becauſe the Gratification of it is ſweet to corrupt Nature. Or, if you have ſolemnly promiſed to God to Diſcharge ſuch and ſuch Duties of Chriſtianity which you formerly neglected, don't Neglect them any longer, becauſe 'tis an hard and difficult thing to perform them aright: but *ſpeedily* Pay every one of your Vows, that reſpect either Sin or Duty. This univerſal Regard to our Vows is plainly required of us in Deut. 23.23. *That which is gone out of thy Lips,* that is, whatever lawful Vow thou haſt made, *thou ſhalt keep and perform.* i. e. Thou ſhalt pay one as well as another of hem. Or in other Terms, Thou ſhalt ay *every one* of them.

5. *Direction,* You muſt Pay all your Vows with *a willing and cheerful Heart.* As you ought to make your Vows with the free Conſent of your Souls: So the Payment of them muſt be a Free-will Offering to

to the LORD. You must engage in, and go thro' with the Duty, with a cheerful and ready Heart, *Doing all as unto the Lord.*

AND then,

6. *Direction*, Lastly, YOU must have a *firm & steady Dependance upon* GOD thro' JESUS CHRIST, for His gracious Assistance and Acceptance in the Right Discharge of this Duty. The Payment of our Vows is a Religious and Holy Service; and we need the special *Aids* of Divine Grace for the faithful Discharge of it. You must therefore humbly and earnestly ask of GOD, the Help of His SPIRIT in this important Affair (*Matth.* 7. 7.) And when you have done your best, by His gracious Assistance, you must plead with GOD to accept the Offering at your Hands thro' JESUS CHRIST; For our best Duties and Sacrifices are imperfect and polluted as they come from us, and need to be sprinkled with the precious Blood of the great Sacrifice; the merit of which alone renders both the Persons and Services of the Saints acceptable to GOD. And therefore we are said in Eph. 1. 6. to be *made accepted in the Beloved.*

FINIS.

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